

HERAWĪ'S CONCEPT OF TAWHĪD: AN OBSERVATION BASED ON HIS *MANĀZIL AL-SĀ'IRĪN*¹

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Abstrak

Artikel ini merupakan suatu observasi awal terhadap pandangan dan tafsiran 'Abdullah al-Anṣārī al-Herawī, seorang tokoh sufi Hanbali terkenal berdasarkan karyanya Manāzil al-Sā'irīn, tentang konsep dan peringkat-peringkat tawhid. Ia juga cuba mengetengahkan persepsi sebenar terhadap tafsiran tersebut berpanduan komentar-komentar yang dikemukakan oleh golongan tokoh-tokoh sufi terkemudian. Artikel ini juga antara lain menonjolkan bagaimana salah faham dan silap tafsiran terhadap kata-kata dan ungkapan para sufi berlaku, yang seterusnya mendorong ke arah hukuman dan tanggapan yang salah terhadap keperibadian seseorang sufi.

INTRODUCTION

'Abdullah al-Anṣārī al-Herawī is one of the great Hanbalite ṣufīs well known in the history of the Islamic sufism. He is considered as one of those who plays an important role in reforming Islamic Sufism according to the practice of the great Islamic ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣaleḥ*).² His sufism is based on the Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet. He considers sufism as an integral part of Islām and believes that a wayfarer toward Allāh must first be a good muslim.³ Unfortunately, despite this important role by al-Herawī, it seems that his sufism was relatively ignored by the scholars or at least

¹ This article is originally a term paper submitted to Prof. Dr. Omar Jah on April 27th, 2000 for the course Major Schools of Sufism in the International Inst. of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Kuala Lumpur. Some addition and correction had been made for the publication.

² See further about al-Herawī's important role in reforming sufism in an "Appreciation" (*Taqdīr*) written by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd in M. S. al-Afghānī, *Shaikh al-Islām 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī Mabādiuhū wa Ārā'uhū al-Kalāmiyyah wa al-Ruḥiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, n.d.), 3-6, hereinafter cited as *Shaikh al-Islām*. Also al-Taftāzānī, Abū al-Wafā, *Madkhal ilā al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1979), 149-51, hereinafter cited as *Madkhal*.

³ See Farḥādī, A.G.R., *'Abdullāh Anṣārī of Herat (1006-1089 C.E.): An Early Ṣufi Master* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 12, hereinafter cited as *'Abdullāh Anṣārī*.

was not put in the right track in the history of Islamic sufism especially in the Hanbalism tradition. Names like Vladimir Ivanov,⁴ Hellmut Ritter⁵ and Serge de Beaurecueil⁶ are considered as pioneers among the Western scholars who studied al-Herawī and his works. On the other hand, the development of Wahhabism, according to Farhādī, gives a great impact to this phenomenon where “the great traditional figures of Hanbalism who respected sufism are no longer considered as deserving the attention of researchers. The official media and popular publications in the countries concerned are silent about those great Hanbalite figures of Sunnī Islām who were also great ṣufīs”.⁷

This article, which discusses about al-Herawī's Concept of Tawhīd, is an attempt to examine his view on sufi's concept of *tawhīd*. There are some reasons why I choose al-Herawī and his concept of *tawhīd* for discussion.⁸ However, the most important reason that brings out this study is the criticism on al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd* written by Ibn Taymiyyah in his *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*.⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah critiques of sufism

⁴ He wrote the article about “The Ṭabaqāt of Anṣārī in the Old Language of Herat” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, January 1923 which concentrated on the linguistic aspects rather than on sufism, see Farhādī, ‘*Abdullāh al-Anṣārī*’, xi.

⁵ In his article (in German) “Philologika VII: Anṣārī Herewī...” in *Der Islam*, 22:1934.

⁶ He published number of articles and a book (in French) on al-Herawī, his work and Sufism. His published articles are Pauvreté et Vie Spirituelle chez ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī in *Mardis de Dar-as-Salam*, Paris-Vrin, t. 1953-54, p. 65-81, Les References Bibliques de l’Itinéraire Spirituel chez ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī in *MIDEO*, 1, 1954, p. 9-38, La Place de Prochain dans la Vie Spirituelle d’après ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī in *MIDEO*, 2, 1955, p. 5-70, Autour d’un Texte d’Anṣārī, la Problematique Musulmane de l’Espérance in *Revue Thomiste*, 1959, n.2, p. 339-366, Le Retour à Dieu (*tawba*), Élément Essentiel de la Conversion selon ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī et ses Commentateurs in *MIDEO*, 6, 1959-61, p. 55-122, L’Aspiration à Dieu (*Raghba*), Rectification de l’Espérance, in *MIDEO*, 7, 1962-63, p. 1-20 and La Structure du Livre des Etapes de Khwāja Abdullāh Anṣārī, in *MIDEO*, 11, 1972, p. 77-127. He also edited and published two works by al-Herawī; *Kitāb-ṣad Maydān* in *Mélanges Islamologiques*, t. 2, Le Caire, IFAO, 1954 and *Les Etapes des Itinérants vers Dieu (Manāzil al-Sā’irīn)*, (Le Caire, IFAO, 1962), 181+116 pages.

⁷ Farhādī, ‘*Abdullāh Anṣārī*’, 13.

⁸ I actually get to know al-Herawī and his great work *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* since I was in Cairo in 1995 attending courses for Master’s program whereby my professor, Prof. Dr. Hasan al-Shāfi‘e proposed the topic *al-Maqāmat wa al-Aḥwāl ‘inda al-Herawī* (The Stations and States according to al-Herawī) as a term paper to fulfill the course requirement. Since then, I started to collect materials about al-Herawī for the purpose of re-examine and revive the idea and the approach. I found that al-Herawī in his *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* has an interesting approach in guiding the wayfarers toward Allāh and it is possible with some simplification and interpretation to use this approach in guiding today’s Muslim society toward a better life in this world as well as the Hereafter.

⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, ed. M. al-Sayyid al-Jalayand, (Cairo: Maṭba‘ah al-Taqaḍdum, 1979), 102.

are well known especially on the great ṣufī like Ibn 'Arabī, but perhaps it is quite unfamiliar to hear about his critique of al-Herawī, especially when we know that both of them are Hanbalite.

The article focuses, in general, about al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd* based on his famous work *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*. It is preceded by a brief introduction about al-Herawī's life and works, followed by a discussion about al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd*. It is hoped that this small effort will be a basic ground of my personal interest to study al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd* in particular, and his sufism approach in general, in the future.

'ABDULLĀH AL-ANṢĀRĪ AL-HERAWĪ: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Abū Ismā'il 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr b. Mat al-Anṣārī al-Herawī, came from the family of Abū Ayyūb Khālīd b. Zayd al-Khazraǧī al-Najǧārī al-Azdī, a companion of the Prophet's (Peace and Blessing of the Lord be on him). He was born in Sha'ban 396 A.H./1006 C.E in Herat.¹⁰ He was one of the most respected scholars of his time, known as *Shaykh al-Islām* (The Senior of Islam), *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* (Senior of the Seniors), *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah* (The Leader of the Sunnite) of Herat, *Nāṣir al-Sunnah* (Supporter of the Prophetic Tradition), *Zayn al-'Ulamā'* (Ornament of Scholars), *Khatīb al-'Ajam* (Persian Preacher) and others.¹¹ In Persian writings, his name is often preceded by the name of *Khawādǧā*, which means "Master."¹²

Al-Herawī is a Hanbalite and was known as one of the great admirers of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, the founder of the Hanbalite. He states that "The Hanbalite is the most praiseworthy sect" (*madhhab Aḥmad*) and according to the biographer, he writes a poem called *Qaṣīdat Nūniyyah* where he compliments Ibn Ḥanbal and the

¹⁰ Ibn Rajab, Abū al-Farǧ, *Kitāb al-Dhail 'ala Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, published as a supplement of *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 3: 50, hereinafter cited as *al-Dhail*. Some historians and biographers state other statement about the year of al-Herawī's birth, for instance, Ibn al-Jawzī states that it is in 395 A.H., see *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Muluk wa al-Umam*, (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyyah, 1359 A.H.), 9: 45, hereinafter cited as *al-Muntaẓam*, whereas Ismā'il Bāshā al-Baghḍādī said that it is in 397 A.H., see *Hadiyyat al-'Arīfīn Asmā' al-Mu'allifīn wa Athār al-Muṣannifīn*, (Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi, 1951) 1:452, hereinafter cited as *Hadiyyat*. See about his parent in al-Afghānī, *Shaikh al-Islām*, 18-23.

¹¹ Abī Ya'li, Abū al-Hussain, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 2:247, hereinafter cited as *Ṭabaqāt*. Also, Farḥādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 4-5. The story about his life (*manāqib*) was narrated in *Kitāb al-Mādiḥ wa al-Mamduḥ* by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Rāfiawī, see Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhail*, 3:50.

¹² Farḥādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 4. This honorific title, according to Farḥādī, is still addressed to descendants of the major companions of the Prophet living in the Persian-speaking lands, *Ibid*.

Hanbalites.¹³ As a Hanbalite, he is supposed to be extremely aware and free from all sorts of sufism "deviations" or some thing that could be accused as deviated. But, in the contrary, his sufism was claimed to belong to what they called as an annihilation of Oneness (*al-fanā' fi al-tawhīd*) which is similar to al-Junayd's concept of *Tawhīd*.¹⁴ This idea and doctrine is probably the main factor that led some latter Hanbalite such as Ibn Taimiyyah¹⁵ and the other Sunnite¹⁶ to criticize him.

Al-Herawī is respectively recognized as a distinguished scholar in various fields of Islamic sciences like *tafsir*, *hadith*, *tasawwuf*, Arabic literature and history.¹⁷ He died and was buried in Herat in 481 A.H./ 1089 C.E. at the age of 82.¹⁸ He wrote books and treatises in different fields of Islamic sciences including *tafsir*, theology and *tasawwuf*. Some of his works in *tasawwuf* are *Ilal al-Maqāmāt*, *Sharḥ al-Ta'ārruf li Madhhab al-Tasawwuf* and *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*.

The latter work, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, is considered as al-Herawī's famous and most important work in sufism. Many commentaries have been made on the text. Some of the famous commentators are 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 730 A.H.), Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Tabādkānī al-Tūsī (d. 891 A.H.), Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Dargozīnī (d. 743 A.H.), Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Wāṣitī (d.711 A.H.) and Shams al-Dīn Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah al-Dimashqī (d.751 A.H.) and others.¹⁹

AL-HERAWI'S CONCEPT OF TAWHID (ONENESS)

The discussion about al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd* presented in this article is not actually a complete study on the subject, but it is merely a preliminary observation on the topic based on his famous *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* (The Stations of the Wayfarers). He

¹³ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhail*, 3: 51-3. See about his Hanbalism and his place in the historical development of Hanbalism in Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 11-14.

¹⁴ See al-Taftāzānī, *Madkhal*, 150.

¹⁵ See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, 102.

¹⁶ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhail*, 3: 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3: 64.

¹⁸ Ibn Jawzi, *Al-Muntazam*, 9:45, Abū Ya'li, *Tabaqāt*, 2: 248 and Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhail*, 3: 67. See details about his life and journey in al-Afghānī, *Shaikh al-Islām*, 23-95, Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 5-11 and the first part of De Beaurecueil, S. L., *Khawādja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī Mystique Hanbaliite*, (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), entitled: La Vie de Khwādja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī.

¹⁹ Hāji Khalīfa, *Kashf al-Zunūn 'an Asāmi al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, ed. Serefettin Yaltkaya (Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi, 1972), 2:1828. See also the opinions of the commentators about the book in De Beaurecueil, S.L., *La Structure du Livre Des Etapes de Khwādja Abdullāh Anṣārī*, in *Melanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales* (MIDEO), 11 (1972): 80-91.

dictated this small book to one of his young novices in 474 A.H./1082 C.E., seven years before he died (at the age of 75). It is considered as a true representative of his mystical thought since it was written at the end of his life.²⁰

The book tries to present and give some guidance about the stations toward Allāh²¹ for the wayfarers. Al-Herawī suggests that there are hundred stations where the wayfarers had to go through in their spiritual journey towards Allāh. These stations are divided into ten which are the Beginnings (*al-bidāyah*), the Doors (*al-abwāb*), the Actions (*al-mu'āmalāt*), the Virtues (*al-akhlāq*), the Principles (*al-uṣūl*), the Valleys (*al-awdiyah*), the Spiritual States (*al-aḥwāl*), the Guardianships (*al-wilāyāt*), the Realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*) and the Fulfillment (*al-nihāyāt*).²² The station of *tawhīd* is the last stage of the fulfillment's part and is, accordingly, the last destination for the wayfarers in their journey towards Allāh.

a. Reality of *Tawhīd*

Tawhīd according to al-Herawī, is to transcend (*tanzīh*) Allāh from the contingent being (*al-ḥadath*).²³ This definition of *tawhīd*, as suggested by some commentators, should not be understood in the rational way as the sufi's concept of *tawhīd* is deeper and beyond the rational level. It is clear because the intellect normally testifies the Oneness of Allāh by exception and believing that there are contingent beings and then latter, by denying this contingent being it reaches the Oneness of Allāh. The limitation of the human intellect causes them to be veiled from perceiving, in a very beginning, the reality of the existence of Allāh, where there is actually no existence but Allāh. Therefore, they could not realize the Oneness of Allāh directly from this reality.²⁴

However, in order to reach this proper level of belief or recognition in *tawhīd*, it is not as easy as people think. This is why scholars and the great Sufis (*al-*

²⁰ Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 10 and 75. The book was published in Egypt several time and was edited and translated into French by Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil and published by the French Institute of Oriental Archeology (IFAO) in Cairo in 1962. It was also translated into Persian by Abdul Ghafūr Ravan Farhādī and published in Kabul: Bayhaqi, 1971, then reprinted in Tehran by Mawlā in 1982.

²¹ Here I prefer to use the name "Allāh" instead of "God" to show the specification of the Islamic concept of God, especially when we deal with the Islamic thought and civilization.

²² See al-Herawī, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn ilā al-Ḥaqq 'iz Sha'nuhū* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalabī, 1966), 3-6, hereinafter cited as *Manāzil*. Most of the English translation of the text is based on Farhādī's translation in his 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 77-88.

²³ Al-Herawī, *Manāzil*, 47.

²⁴ See al-Tilimsānī, 'Afīf al-Dīn, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, ed. A. H. Maṣṣūr, (Qum: Intishārāt Bidār, 1989), 601, hereinafter cited as *Sharḥ* and al-Kāshānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, (India: n.p., 1315 H.), 264-65, hereinafter cited as *Sharḥ*.

muḥaqqiqūn) have to discuss about it. The only purpose is to reach the reality of this concept, i.e. the concept of the Oneness of Allāh.

b. Stages of *Tawḥīd*

The Oneness of Allāh, according to al-Herawī can be understood in three different stages for three different levels of the wayfarers. The first stage or aspect of *tawḥīd* is the *tawḥīd* of the common people (*al-‘āmmah*), that is the *tawḥīd* based or depended on the signs or testimonies (*al-shawahid*). The second is the *tawḥīd* of the privileged ones (*al-khāṣṣah*), that is the *tawḥīd* supported or affirmed by the realities (*al-ḥaqā’iq*), and the third or the highest level of *tawḥīd* is the *tawḥīd* of the privileged among the privileged ones (*khāṣṣat al-khāṣṣah*). Al-Herawī describes this highest level of *tawḥīd* as the *tawḥīd* supported by the Pre-existence (*qā’im bi al-Qidam*).²⁵

The first level of *tawḥīd*, according to al-Herawī is to attest that there is no divinity except Allāh, the One with no associates and nothing is comparable to Him. Al-Herawī herein refers to the Qur’anic verse that states: “Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him” (*Ṣurāt al-Ikhlās*, 112: 1-4). This level of *tawḥīd* is “the manifest and evident Oneness” (*al-tawḥīd al-zāhir al-jaliyy*), where those who truly admit this attestation become a muslim and deserve all the muslim’s right such as protection as well as the religious duties. The other condition of this level of *tawḥīd* is that the attestation, even without establishing a correct or clear argumentation on it, must be sincerely admitted, supported and confirmed by heart and therefore be freed from all kind of uncertainties (*al-shubḥah*), perplexity (*al-ḥīrah*) and doubt (*al-rībah*).²⁶ This level of *tawḥīd* can be reached through observing and contemplating the testimonies (*al-shawahid*), i.e. the mission of the prophet (*al-risālāh*) and the creations (*al-ṣanā’i’*) of Allāh. It becomes necessary after the hearing (*al-sam’*), i.e. the revelation, and it exists and becomes perceivable through Allāh’s enlightenment (*bi tabṣīr al-Haqq Ta‘āla*) and is developed by seeing and witnessing the testimonies.²⁷

This level of *tawḥīd*, as mentioned by al-Herawī, is the level of the common people (*al-‘āmmah*) who could not perceive the reality of *tawḥīd* except from the sensible and rational argument. It is probably the stage of *tawḥīd* based on the theological and philosophical argument, the stage considered by the Sufis as the lowest level of *tawḥīd*. Dhū al-Nūn, for instance, states that the first level of knowledge of God is a grant (*al-takhyīr*), then the spontaneity (*al-ikhtiyār*) and finally an association (*al-*

²⁵ Al-Herawī, *Manāzil*, 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* See also al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ*, 605.

ittiṣāl).²⁸ This level of *tawhīd*, according to al-Ghazālī, is not the true reality of *tawhīd* of Allāh, but it is merely the knowledge of His Attributes and Actions.²⁹

The *tawhīd* of the privileged one (*al-khāṣṣah*) is the second level of *tawhīd* and it is confirmed by the realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq*). These realities, as explained by some commentators,³⁰ are the stations of the ninth section of his *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, that is the section of the Realities (*qism al-ḥaqā'iq*) which is composed of Unveiling (*mukashāfah*), Contemplation (*mushāhadah*), Observation (*mu'āyanah*), Life (*ḥayāt*), Grasping (*qabd*), Stretching (*baṣṭ*), Intoxication (*sukr*), Lucidity (*ṣaḥw*), Association (*ittiṣāl*) dan Disassociation (*infisāl*). Thus, those who have reached this level, accordingly, possesses all these realities. Therefore, it is understandable why those privileged who reach this level of *tawhīd*, according to al-Herawī, realize or see nothing but Allāh and view the precedence (*sabaq*) of Allāh as the only Existence, with His Wisdom and Knowledge. In addition, they also see and understand how things are put in their proper places and how things are related to their moments (*bi aḥyāyiniha*) and concealed (*ikhfā'*) in their patterns (*rusūm*).³¹ By reaching this level, they do not need any other kind of existence and testimonies to proof and argue about the Oneness of Allāh since they had already realized it directly from their knowledge about the reality of the existence of Allāh. This is why it was said that they are also possess the reality and knowledge of the causes (*al-'ilal*) and step into the path of casting away the contingent being (*isqāt al-ḥadath*). This level of *tawhīd*, according to al-Herawī is achieved through the knowledge of the annihilation (*'ilm al-fanā'*) and is purified by the knowledge of the concentration (*al-'ilm al-jam'*) and therefore, as a result, it will brings to the higher level of *tawhīd*, i.e. *tawhīd* of those who enjoy the concentration (*tawhīd arbāb al-jam'*).³² This stage of *tawhīd* is perhaps the stage described by al-Junayd when he says: "I knew my Lord through Him, if He does not exist, I could not know Him".³³

The third and the highest level of *tawhīd* is the *tawhīd* that Allāh has specified for Himself and no other existence is unified (*yuwahḥid*) with this specific *tawhīd* because, in accordance with the measure (*qadr*) of His unique Essence, He is the One

²⁸ See al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddimah fī al-Taṣawwuf wa Ḥaqīqatihi* ed. Y Zidān, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1987), p. 38.

²⁹ Al-Ghazālī, "Risālah fī Bayān Ma'rifat Alfāh", in *Thalath Rasā'il fī al-Ma'rifah lam Tunshar min Qabl*, ed. M.II.Zaqzuq, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Azhar, 1979), p. 17-8.

³⁰ Al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ*, 602-3 and 606 and al-Kāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 266.

³¹ Al-Herawī, *Manāzil*, 47.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddimah*, p. 36.

and the Only who deserves it. This is the level where no words could describe it reality, but on the contrary, any effort to explain or describe it with any sorts of explanation and description will raise more difficulty and veil to understand it as it is. The reason here is because there is nobody, except Him, who actually acquires the knowledge of this reality. The only knowledge of this reality that the Sufī probably perceives, by the blessing of Allāh, is what al-Herawī named as a gleam (*lā'ih*) of the reality and not the reality itself. Therefore, based on this fact, al-Herawī suggests that even those allegorical statements that had been stated before in order to describe the previous level of *tawhīd*, i.e. the statement “casting away the contingent being (*iṣqāt al-ḥadath*) and the confirmation of Pre-existence (*ithbāt al-Qidam*)”, is considered here in this highest level of *tawhīd* as a fault (*'illat*) and must be ignored.³⁴

Al-Tilimsānī in his commentary gives a clear interpretation on this suggestion. He states that “casting away the contingent being (*iṣqāt al-ḥadath*)” and “confirming the Pre-existence (*ithbāt al-Qidam*)” was needed and necessary for those who does not know the reality where there is actually no existence but Allāh, the Pre-existence (*al-Qidam*). Whereas, on the contrary, those who actually acquired this knowledge can see and understand this reality and, consequently, do not need these sorts of premises to proof and perceive the Oneness of Allāh as the common people (*al-'āmmah*) do, therefore, they cast it away.³⁵

This highest level of *tawhīd* is the last destination and station of the sufi. It is the highest aim and purpose for the wayfarers. It could be described, according to al-Herawī, in three couplets, as below:

No one can declare the Unity of the Unique
 If anyone declares the Unity of Him, (he is) a denier
 The declaration of Unity by anyone speaking from his own description
 Is something shameful and nullified by the Unique
 The declaring of His Unity is for Him to declare!
 And the description of anyone describing Him is heretical!³⁶

These three couplets have a deep meaning and literally it could be understood in different ways. Therefore, it is important to mention that these couplets must be read and understood properly. Al-Manūfī, who wrote a contemporary commentary on al-Herawī's *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, refused to accept these three couplets as al-Herawī's

³⁴ See al-Herawī, *Manāzil*, 47-8, Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 87-8. Also al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ*, 608-10, al-Manūfī, S.M. Abū al-Fayd, *al-Tamkīn fī Sharḥ Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah Misr, 1969), 352-53, hereinafter cited as *al-Tamkīn*.

³⁵ Al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ*, 610. Also al-Kāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 269.

³⁶ Al-Herawī, *Manāzil*, 48 and Farhādī, 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, 88.

writing. He claims that these three couplets was interpolated and wrongly attributed to al-Herawī. The reason is, according to his view, the couplets contain the idea of pantheism (*wihdat al-wujūd*) or an incarnation (*al-ḥulūl*) of God in the creation, and al-Herawī as a sunni would not say such a doctrine.³⁷ On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyyah probably refers to the same couplets and perception when he accuses al-Herawī as believing in incarnation (*al-ḥulūl*) and unification (*al-ittiḥād*).³⁸

These are the opinions and judgments by some scholars on al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd*. These judgments are the outcomes of misunderstanding and misconception of the ṣūfi's thought and words especially those allegorical couplets or saying. Therefore, it is necessary before judging the ṣūfi and their saying, one has to try to understand them according to the Sūfi's perception and interpretation, and it is important to affirm that the real ṣūfis, not the pseudo ones, are the only authority in clarifying their words.

These three couplets, as suggested by some commentators, propose a great view on the Oneness of Allāh. The first couplet expresses that no one could describe the reality of Allāh's Oneness because He has already specified this Oneness (*tawhīd*) for Himself. Thus, any attempt made by anyone to describe the reality by using any language or description will lead to a sort of denying the transcendental of the Oneness of Allāh and consequently they were called as a "denier" (*jāḥid*). To explain this further, al-Herawī states in the second couplet that the declaration of the Oneness of Allāh from the human perception and description is considered as shameful (*'āriyat*), unacceptable and nullified (*abīḥala*) by the Absolute Unique. Accordingly, the right to declare the reality of the Oneness of Allāh is only for Him because He is the One who acquires the knowledge of His own reality. Thus, to illustrate Him with any description is heretical (*lāḥid*) because the description means to ascribe Allāh what is against His transcendence (*nazāḥah*).³⁹

This is actually what al-Herawī meant by quoting these couplets. It expresses clearly the highest level of *tawhīd*, the level that is beyond the human rational and senses. On the other hand, it clearly proved from this point of view, that these couplets do not consist of any idea related to the incarnation (*al-ḥulūl*) or the unity of being (*pantheism* or *wihdat al-wujūd*) as claimed by some scholar,⁴⁰ but it is rather the highest form of *tawhīd* that human being could perceive. This reality of *tawhīd* was recog-

³⁷ al-Manūfī, *al-Tamkīn*, 353-54.

³⁸ See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, 102.

³⁹ See al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ*, 611 and al-Kāshānī, *Sharḥ*, 270 and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, ed. M.H. al-Faḡā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1972), 3:514.

⁴⁰ Ibn Qayyim gives a clear interpretation about al-Herawī's concept of *tawhīd* and affirms that it is absolutely differ from the doctrine of the incarnation or the pantheism, *Ibid.*, 3:517-21.

nized by the sufis and it is considered as the highest knowledge that people could ever reached and understood about the reality of Allāh. They admit that only Allāh knows the reality of His Essence and no one else could identify It. The knowledge of Allāh that people think they have is not actually the knowledge of His Essence but it is the knowledge based on His Actions or His Attributes. These are the way people could know their Lord through and the knowledge that they perceived through this way is not the knowledge of God's Essence but the knowledge of His Actions and His Attributes.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it is important to state and affirm some observations concerning al-Herawī as a sufi Hanbalite and his sufism. Al-Herawī is considered as one of the sufi pioneers who played a significance role in the development of Islamic Sufism. His place in the history of Islamic Sufism shows that his approach in reforming the Sufism based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah was accepted respectively by the Muslim in general, as well as by the Sufis themselves. The reason is, in my opinion, because he himself understands and realizes the reality of sufism and he is considered as an authority in the field. Therefore, any of his criticism or *review* on sufism was perceived and accepted since it is based on the knowledge and explained in the same language used by the sufis. This also demonstrates why some *fuqahā* who tries to play the same role in the field failed to gain any influences.

Related to his sufism especially in his concept of *tawhīd*, it is clear that al-Herawī can be named as one of the representatives among the higher sufi thinkers in the history of Islamic Sufism. His concept of *tawhīd* explains that he had perceived and reached to the higher reality and knowledge of the Oneness of Allāh as described by the great sufi masters. This perception and interpretation of *tawhīd*, which was expressed by al-Herawī who views Sufism in the light of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, also proofs that the sufi's belief and understand about the concept of *tawhīd* is actually on the basis of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and not deviated from it as claimed by those who was misled in understanding the sufi.

⁴¹ See further explanation about this reality of *tawhīd* and knowledge, al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddimah*, p. 35-40, al-Tūsi, *al-Luma'*, ed. A.H. Maḥmūd *et. al.*, (Cairo: Maṭba'ah al-Sa'adah, n.d.), p. 49-64, al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, trans. Into Arabic by Is'ād A.H. Qandīl, (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'la li al-Shu'un al-Islāmiyyah, 1974), 2:509-18 and al-Ghazālī's *Risālah fi Bayān Ma'rifat Allāh*.